



News Release

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Utah Facilities Perform Well in Gallbladder and Stroke Care

Quality similar to national averages but costs vary widely

(Salt Lake City, UT) – One of the most important decisions Utahns can make is choosing a health care facility that will provide the best care for themselves and family members. To help Utahns be better informed of their choices when seeking medical care, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) Health Data Committee (HDC) has released two new comparison reports on stroke care and gallbladder removal.

Both reports compare performance factors like in-hospital deaths, average charges, length-of-stay, and how frequently each facility performs the procedures – all measures that can help consumers make informed choices. “Patients who shop for the right care at the right price may inspire efficiency among providers, which could ultimately lead to lower health care costs,” said Dr. Keely Cofrin Allen, HDC Executive Secretary.

UDOH data show that nearly 180 Utahns are hospitalized for stroke every month. Stroke is a dangerous condition that, without proper and timely care, can lead to mental impairment and paralysis. Nearly 700 stroke patients died in Utah hospitals from 2004-2006. Most hospitals (22 out of 23) that treated 30 or more stroke patients had the same percentage of stroke deaths as expected nationally. One hospital had fewer deaths than expected when compared to national counterparts.

In 2006, Utah hospitals performed more than 670 gallbladder removals every month. Nearly 95% of the surgeries were performed laparoscopically, using several very small incisions instead of the single larger, more invasive incision that is used during an “open” procedure.

Although patients generally recover more quickly after a laparoscopic (lap) procedure, some laps can change mid-procedure to an “open” surgery if the patient’s safety is at risk. Overall,

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Utah had a higher rate (84%) of lap inpatients than similar patients in the U.S. (76%).

Seventeen (17) of the 22 Utah hospitals studied in this report had a higher percentage of inpatient lap gallbladder removals when compared to national counterparts. The five (5) hospitals with a lower inpatient percentage versus the nation tend to treat patients with more complex gallbladder problems and medical history.

Average hospital charges for the report measures differed widely among health care facilities in 2006. For reporting facilities treating five or more patients at the minor/moderate illness level, average charges ranged from:

Utah Health Care Facility Charges, 2006	Type of Stay	Lowest Average Charge	Highest Average Charge	State Average
Stroke	Inpatient	\$5,015	\$16,550	\$12,127
Gallbladder Removal	Outpatient	\$2,841	\$11,976	\$6,258

As expected, average charge for patients treated at the major/extreme level of illness was higher. Average charges shown in the reports do not include physicians' professional fees or personal costs borne by the patient.

For more information, contact Mike Martin at 801-538-9205 or 801-859-8538. To see a full copy of the reports, visit <http://www.health.utah.gov/myhealthcare/hospital.htm#sb132>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.